

Step 9

Reading for Step Nine

Big Book: Chapter 6, Into Action, from: Page 82, line 17 Thru: Page 84, line 15.

12&12: Step 9

Our experience with Step Nine prompts us to emphasize four ideas about this step.

Token amends will not do! Just what is an amend? Here is what our trusty dictionary says:

a-mend : (uh mend') v. v.t.

2. to change for the better; improve.

3. to remove or correct faults in; rectify.

v.i. <

4. to grow or become better by reforming oneself.

Later in this document you will see an extraction of words and phrases that the authors of the Big Book used to describe what they meant by the word amend. Their true meaning, while including the definition above, is more like the synonyms for the word, rectify:

rectify : v.

1. right, set right, put right, make right, correct, adjust, regulate, straighten, square; focus, attune; mend, amend, emend, fix, repair, revise; remedy, redress, cure, reform.

One might even use the definition of the word, "repair", to express their meaning:

re-pair : [1] (ri pār') -paired, -pair-ing . v.t.

1. to restore to a good or sound condition after decay or damage; mend.

2. to restore or renew.

3. to remedy; make up for; compensate for.

Extracted words and phrases as examples of "amends":

BB = the Big Book of AA, Alcoholics Anonymous

12&12 = Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Self-Correction

...sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will. [BB, page 76, line 22]

...demonstration of good will [BB, page 77, line 13]

...sweep off our side of the street [BB, page 77, line 32]

...sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it. [BB, page 83, line 2]

...We clean house with the family... [BB, page 83, line 7]

...asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love. [BB, page 83, line 8]

...The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it... [BB, page 83, line 11]

...Our behavior will convince them more than our words. [BB, page 83, line 15]

...There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. [BB, page 83, line 19]

...Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. [BB, page 83, line 22]

...We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. [BB, page 83, line 25]

Restitution

...repair the damage [we have] done in the past. [BB, page 76, line 21]

...set right the wrong [BB, page 77, line 12]

...straighten out the past [BB, page 77, line 32]

...arranging the best deal... [of repayment] ... we can [BB, page 78, line 21]

...reparations [BB, page 79, line 5]

...sent...money [BB, page 79, line 29]

...willing to go to jail [BB, page 79, line 30]

...make a public statement [BB, page 80, line 15] ... [make]...good to the wife or parents [BB, page 82, line 19]

...reconstruction [BB, page 83, line 1]

Apology

...confessing our former ill feeling [BB, page 77, line 27]

...expressing our regret [BB, page 77, line 27]

...we let these people know we are sorry [BB, page 78, line 21]

...admitting faults [BB, page 79, line 28]

...admit our fault [BB, page 81, line 21]

...asking forgiveness [BB, page 79, line 28]

...A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. [BB, page 83, line 2]

2. Don't rush into amends without guidance. You can mess up yourself and others unless the best judgment is used. When we are new to

sobriety, our judgment is often not so swift. Please read again the words we offered for Step Eight, which is the planning of your amendment step.

3. Your amends must never harm others. Both of the books make clear that we cannot seek atonement at the expense of others. Be especially careful not to implicate or injure other people in your wrong-doing.

4. Don't forget to take the hidden step – forgiveness. You will recall that in Step Four you listed the people who had harmed you as part of your resentment matrix. None of the steps emphasizes sufficiently that the ultimate process of resentment eradication (and they must be wiped out) is forgiveness of those we resent. If you have not yet cleaned up your resentments, finish them off in Step Nine. It then becomes the double-edged sword that cuts you free from all harms done by you and to you.

However, there is a difference between being forgiven and forgiving. Our amends to those we have harmed are made at our own initiative and directly to the person harmed, whenever possible. On the other hand, when we are forgiving others, it is rarely appropriate to approach them to let them know they are forgiven. Why?

They might have no idea that we have resented them. After all, the resentment is ours. Letting them in on our problem cannot do them any good, and may cause them considerable hurt feelings or aggravation – even anger.

We have been learning not to play God and to avoid ego-serving activities. Approaching others to let them know they are forgiven would usually be thought of as self-serving. This we avoid.

If, on the other hand, the injuring party has let us know that they feel guilt about what they have done, it can often be a true act of kindness to let them know they are off the hook as far as we are concerned. We do this with true humility and compassion. We never give the impression that

they owe us something for our act of forgiveness. We then try to treat them the way we want others to forgive us for our own wrongs.

Some of our members believe that the other side of the forgiveness coin, that we are forgiven for our transgressions, is a necessary goal of Step 9. There is no need at all that we be forgiven by the person we have harmed after we make an amend. If they choose to tell us we are forgiven, that is a fine gesture – one we might cherish. However, the real goal here is that you cease to know guilt stemming from your prior acts or omissions. The removal of guilt is the exclusive domain of your spiritual power.

On your way. Your Step 9 can last from several weeks to many years. Start it when you have finished step 8 and are told to do so. Continue until you are done.

Promises of Step Nine

Here are the 20 promises starting at the bottom of page 83 in the Big Book. Some people think these are the only promises the Big Book makes. Little do they realize that each step has a set of promises, and that there are many more besides. There are even a few guarantees. Drop us a line if you have found the 173 promises and guarantees in the Big Book that we have found.

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development,

we will be amazed before we are half way through.

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

That feeling of uselessness (will disappear) and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and (we will) gain interest in our fellows.

Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Fear of people (will leave us) and (fear) of economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

They will always materialize if we work for them.

Writing: It would be a good idea to update your amendment plan (Step eight) when each amendment is done. Check it off. Make a note as to their reaction. If an agreement was reached concerning further action on your part, write it down. We even know one sponsor who keeps Step 8 lists of his step partners on a computer (on an encrypted file for total privacy). Every month or so, the list is made current.